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West Had High Level Spy Operation Going in Russia

Special to the Post-Bulletin
From the Washington Post

LONDON — "Obviously you can't tell of operations that go along well," wrote Allen Dulles, former director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. "Those that go badly generally speak for themselves."

There is reason to think that in case of Col. Oleg Penkovsky,

who received a death sentence in Moscow Saturday and British "business man" Greville Wynne, sentenced to eight years' imprisonment, the West had a high-level intelligence operation that worked very well indeed until the Soviet Union disrupted it.

It is not necessary to accept as valid all the allegations in the trial about the roles of the re-

spective defendants. The British government understandably has been very quiet about Wynne's activities as the supposed contact man with Penkovsky, and the U.S. has not confirmed charges that Americans also were involved.

Penkovsky's own part, however, unquestionably was very significant. His contributions are de-

scribed here as "invaluable." It is unnecessary to magnify any connection he may have had with big names in the Soviet hierarchy.

He occupied an important position in his own right, and he was able to relay information that helped the West assess Soviet intentions.

Whether Penkovsky was moti-

vated primarily by money or by disillusionment with the Soviet system we are left to guess. Perhaps it was a combination of personal reasons.

In any event, the principal mistake of Western intelligence seems to have been leaving him in his assignment too long. That is one of the hazards of this kind of opera-

tion. The long arm of Soviet counterintelligence reached through the communist bloc to Hungary to apprehend Wynne.

In degrading Penkovsky's personal life, Soviet authorities evidently were trying to soften the impact as well as to emphasize the dangers of espionage. Doubtless Wynne's activities were play-

ed up to discourage Soviet citizens from fraternizing with foreigners. There has been a noticeable toughening of such efforts in recent months.

But nothing can eradicate the fact that the West has been able to penetrate the Soviet structure. This shows some Western expertise in a field in which the com-

munists have been regarded as experts elsewhere.

It could make Soviet authorities more insecure, but it also could increase respect for the West. One interesting byproduct of the U-2 incident was to elicit from communist-bloc diplomats some unconcealed admiration for the sheer technical accomplishment.

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